Hamilton Field,
Double Non-Commissioned Officers'
Quarters Type C
San Jose Drive and Crescent Drive
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-BS

HABS CAL 21-NOVA, IBS-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS CAL 21-NOVA, IBS-

HAMILTON FIELD

Double Non-Commissioned Officers' Quarters, Type C (Facility Nos. 553, 561, 573, 574, 587, 589, 591, 593, 595, 597)

HABS No. CA-2398-BS

Location:

Hamilton Army Air Field

Novato, Marin County, California

Double Non-Commissioned Officers' Quarters, Type C

Facility Nos. 553 (150/152 San Jose Drive), 561 (190/192 San Jose Drive), 573 (270/272 San Jose Drive), 574 (271/273 San Jose Drive), 587 (234/236 Crescent Drive), 589 (244/246 Crescent Drive), 591 (254/256 Crescent Drive), 593 (244/246 Crescent Drive), 595

(270/272 Crescent Drive), and 597 (280/282 Crescent Drive)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980) Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980) UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;

C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Present Owner: U. S. Navy, Washington, D.C.

Present Occupant: Military families

Present Use: Residential

Statement of Significance:

The Type C double Non-Commissioned Officers' (NCO) Quarters are among the original residential units designed by the Constructing Quartermaster's Office at Hamilton Army Air Field. The quarters were equipped with all the modern amenities available at the time they were built and were architecturally unique in the military system. The buildings are significant as an example of the application of an important architectural trend (Spanish Colonial Revival) adapted to reflect California's mission heritage in a dramatic departure from traditional military architecture.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report (HABS No. CA-2398-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

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PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

- 1. Date of Erection: NCO Type C duplexes were built over a two-year period. Facility Nos. 513, 573, and 574 were finished October 19, 1993, at a cost of \$10,836.96 each. Facility Nos. 593 and 595 cost \$13,416.49 each and were finished October 2, 1934. The final Type C units, Nos. 553 and 561, were finished on November 6, 1934, and cost \$13,416.49 each (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
- 2. Architect: Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard 8. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Petes and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermaster's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (Novato Advance May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.
- 3. Original Owner: Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia 8odkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for \$1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force 8ase. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The permanent housing area was transferred to the U. S. Navy in 1974 and remains in Navy ownership in 1995.
- 4. Builder, Contractor, Supplier: Construction of the double NCO Quarters was let in three contracts. Robert E. McKee Company (Los Angeles) received a contract to build five of the duplexes in September 18, 1932. Frank J. Reilley of Sacramento was awarded a contract to construct 12 duplexes on January 21, 1933 for \$65,331 and a second contract to build 18 more of the duplexes on November 3, 1933. This second contract was let for a total of \$242,557. Lewis Lambretti of Mill Valley put in all sidewalks and driveways in the housing area beginning, in November, 1933 (Maniery et al. 1993). Type B units cost \$14,154.36 each (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
- 5. Original Plans and Construction: Original plans for all permanent housing were drawn on linen with black ink by Nurse's corps of architects. The originals have not

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been located, but copies of these plans for all permanent housing (elevations, electrical, plumbing, floor plans) are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division in San Bruno, California, and can be accessed through the U. S. Navy. Original ink plans prepared for driveway and sidewalk paving and depicting site plans of the housing areas are filed at the National Archives. Facility cards for the permanent housing, including an original photograph taken at completion of construction and floor plans, are on file at the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, in Novato, California. Early views of the permanent housing area under construction and at completion of work are contained in the Walt Lyons scrapbook at the Marin County Library, History Room, San Rafael, California.

6. Alterations/Additions: Most of the original steel sash or casement windows have been replaced with aluminum sliders. Kitchens were remodeled in 1955 and original cabinets, appliances, hardware, flooring, and lighting were replaced. In 1962 the tile countertops and backsplashes in the kitchen were removed and replaced with postformed plastic laminate. Kitchen floor coverings were replaced with vinyl asbestos tiles. A recessed light fixture was added over the sink at this time. Some interior fixtures in the remainder of the house have been removed and replaced with modern fixtures.

B. Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HA8S No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The permanent housing area at Hamilton Field was planned around the existing topography to complement the architectural style chosen for the base. Nurse and his team of architects designed reinforced concrete buildings covered with white stucco and red tile roofs and other features such as arcades and ornamental door surrounds in a basic Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was used by Captain Nurse at Randolph Field in Texas and by other Army architects at various bases (Fine and Remington 1972:48; Thomason and Associates 1993). Captain Nurse blended the standard Colonial Revival design with elements borrowed from Moorish, Spanish Churriguerresque, Mission, and Art Moderne styles, creating a unique Spanish Eclectic look.

All permanent housing is of hollow tile and stucco construction and has Mission tile roofs and reinforced concrete foundations. Steel bars were used during construction in

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consideration of the seismic activity of the region. Houses are all equipped with laundry and storage basements, attached garages, built-in closets and cabinets, and tiled bathrooms.

2. Condition of fabric: All of the permanent housing is in excellent condition. The U. S. Navy has maintained the exteriors and interiors of the structures since they took over ownership in the mid 1970s. Navy crews have regularly made repairs, painted as necessary, and conducted routine maintenance.

B. Description of Exterior:

- 1. Overall dimensions: The Non-Commissioned Officers' Quarters Type C have twostory rectangular masses with small projecting stoops on either side. The front elevations feature recessed porches on either corner of the lower story and two cantilevered balconies on the central upper story, flanking a central exterior chimney. The buildings measure 52 feet 8 inches long by 28 feet 8 inches deep. All have partially below grade basements.
- 2. Foundation: Foundations are reinforced concrete and measure two feet thick at the base and one foot thick above the basement floor.
- 3. Walls: The exterior walls are 12-inch hollow tile brick. The tile bricks are coated with cementitious stucco rendered with a smooth face. Exterior detailing consists of porch entrances with two square columns and two pilasters and an S-shaped decorative metal bracket on the central exterior chimney. Paired windows above each porch are separated by a Doric column rendered in stucco-clad cast concrete, above a wrought iron bracket for a potted plant. Projecting reinforced cast concrete window sills are the only other exterior decorative element.
- 4. Structural systems, framing: Structural support is provided by reinforced walls with wood-framed interior walls. Reinforced concrete tie beams extend around the buildings at each floor level. Roof systems consists of terra cotta Mission tile laid on wood rafters with a tile ridge.
- 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The primary entrance to each unit is accessed through a columned porch on the front elevation. Each porch has two columns on the front and an opening on each side. A decorative wrought iron balustrade is located on the side. Concrete steps lead to the porches. Cantilevered wrought iron balconies are located on the central front upper stories of each building. Each unit has a second story porch, separated by the central chimney, supported by projecting concrete slabs with multiple arches. All have decorative wrought iron balustrades. Concrete stoops with exterior stairways provide access to the interior staircases on each side elevation.

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6. Chimneys: An exterior rectangular stucco-covered brick chimney is located on the central front facade of each building. Cast iron cleanout doors and frames are at the chimney bases.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways/doors: Primary entrance doors are located on each porch; secondary doors are at the side elevations of each unit. The primary entrance is through a wooden batten door, consisting of vertical boards with inverted arches at each upper corner. Three hammered iron decorative strap hinges are on the exterior of the door. Three to four rows of protruding iron studs are also present. Each door has a hinged leaded glass peep window, covered by a wrought iron grille in its upper portion. Secondary exterior doors are solid core wood with four lights over three recessed panels. Garage doors are the overhead segmented type with one row of lights above two rows of four recessed panels. Original garage doors had eight recessed panels, some with metal grilles, and were hinged, swinging outward to open.
- b. Windows/shutters: The original exterior windows, of multi-pane metal casement sash, have been replaced with modern metal frame multi-light sash. A cast concrete decorated perforated grille provides light to the bathrooms on the upper story.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape/covering: The buildings have end-gable low-pitched roofs covered with terra cotta Mission tiles with metal gutters, downspouts, and scuppers. A cast concrete splash block is located under each downspout. The roofs have Mission tile ridges.
- b. Cornice/eaves: Eaves on the gable end walls consist of a single row of Mission tiles.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor Plans: The NCO housing units are duplex units, with mirrored floor plans on each story. Units are described individually below.
 - a. Basement: The basements are accessed by exterior garage doors and by stairways from the first floor kitchen. Each floor plan was divided into a garage, laundry room, and boiler room. An unexcavated crawl space is present under the front porch.

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- b. First Floor: The primary access to the units is through a central hallway from the front porch. The hallway provides access to the living room. A dining room and kitchen are located to the rear of the duplex.
- c. Second Floor: Each unit has three bedrooms and a bath surrounding a central hall and a stairway which provides access from the first floor. The floor plans consist of two bedrooms on each rear unit and a bedroom and bath on the front.
- 2. Stairways: The NCO housing units are served by an interior stairway from the first floor hallway to the second story and another from the kitchen to the basement. The primary staircase consists of oak stairs with a mahogany banister. The balustrade consists of alternating turned and square posts, painted white. The newel post is square with chamfered corners and a curved top. There is also a two-inch wide wood rail on the inside wall. The basement stairway is wood with non-skid material on the front portion of the tread. There is a two-inch round wood handrail on the interior staircase wall.
- 3. Flooring: Flooring in all of the main rooms is two-inch red oak. Flooring in the kitchens was originally pine but is now asphalt tile or vinyl, added after 1961. The basement and garage have exposed concrete floors. Flooring in the bathrooms is one-by one-inch and one- by two-inch cream and black, sea green and black, or lavender and black ceramic tiles laid in a pattern. The bathrooms have marble thresholds.
- 4. Wall/ceiling finish: All of the rooms, except for the basement, have painted plaster walls and ceilings. The basement walls are painted concrete or tile. Walls in the bathroom are partially covered with cream, green, or lavender ceramic tile, with a black tile bullnose and baseboard.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways/doors: An arch provides access to the living room from the entry hall, and another wider archway is located between the living room and dining room. All other doors in the house are solid core wood with three recessed plywood panels. The door between the dining room and kitchen swings both ways and has a metal push plate and kick plate.
- 6. Decorative features/trim: Door casings and baseboards are wood and simple in design. Each of the main rooms has a picture molding cornice. Each unit has a living room fireplace. It is constructed of "cast stone" (concrete) and has decorative pilasters on either side and a 12-inch red quarry tile floor and hearth.

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- 7. Hardware: The exterior door has a standard brass thumblatch lock. Interior door hardware consists of a nickel-plated brass decorative circular knob and escutcheon made by Corbin Company. Exterior doors are supported by hammered metal strap hinges, interior doors have standard half-mortise hinges. The original electric plates are plastic and extant in many of the units.
- 8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Steam radiators, primarily made by the American Radiator Company, are located in each room and provide heating. Steam is generated by cast iron boilers located in the basements. The boilers ere made by the Ideal Gas Boiler Company.
 - b. Kitchen Appliances: No original kitchen appliances were noted.
 - c. Ventilation: Ventilation for the attics is through Mission tile vents on the gable ends. The basement is ventilated by cast concrete decorative grilles.
 - d. Lighting: All duplexes have knob and tube wiring with circuit breaker boxes. The original lighting in the first floor hallway consisted of a hall pendant "Monterey Style" twisted wrought iron fixture with one candle light. The fixture in the dining room was "Monterey Style" of twisted wrought iron with three candle-style lights. The living room fixture was in the same style, but with five lights. Wrought iron wall sconces with individual candle-style lights were located on all four dining room walls. Original bedroom lights were surface-mounted canopies with pointed pan glass. The light fixture in the upper hallway was a wrought iron canopy with sixpoints. Many of the lights have been replaced with modern fixtures. Original bethroom lights consist of ceramic wall sconces, flanking the medicine cabinet, and operated by pull chains.
 - e. Plumbing: Each basement has an "Alberene Stone" double sink. The bathroom, located on the second floor, has a "Crane" flush valve toilet, "Trenton Potteries Company" (Trenton, N.J.) wall-mounted sink, and enameled cast iron tub. The original black ceramic toothbrush and glass holders, soap dishes, toilet paper holder, and black plastic-covered wood towel racks are extant, as is the mirrored metal medicine cabinet above the sink.
- 9. Original Furnishings: An arched niche for telephone storage, with a lower wooden shelf, is located in the dining room. There is a built-in bookcase in each living room, with three shelves and two panelled doors, and a china cabinet in the dining room. The china cabinet has two sets of panelled doors, two drawers, and a recessed niche. A linen closet with drawers and shelves is behind the bathroom door. Built-in pull-down

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ironing boards (made by Liberty Mill and Cabinet Company, San Francisco), with two recessed wood-panelled doors, are located in the kitchens. In a few units the boards have been removed and the space is used as a spice cabinet. The kitchen cabinets are wood, with Mission-style hammered metal hinges and latches. They were installed in 1955, replacing the original recessed panelled cabinets.

D. Site:

- 1. General site orientation: The primary facades of the NCO housing units face southerly and northerly. Located in the original Spanish Colonial Revival District of Hamilton Army Air Field on the slope of a rolling hill, they are surrounded by other NCO duplex housing units with the same mass and design.
- 2. Historic landscape design: Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect that was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

In the housing areas the homes sit in well-landscaped grounds with lawns, mature oak and palm trees, shrubs, and flowers. Upright accent trees frame the doors and corners of many buildings. There are no fences; each yard flows into the next and the plantings, stone retaining walls, street light standards, and curved roads lined with palms and other trees provide a cohesive feel to the area. Concrete sidewalks provide separation from the curving streets and connect the houses. The diversity, density, and uniqueness of landscape plantings increased according to military rank of individuals living in the houses; thus landscaping in the NCO area is primarily functional, while that of the base commander is dense and heavily wooded, providing more privacy.

Landscaping in the NCO area include barrier, foundation, accent, and street plantings. Barrier plantings create an illusory separation between houses in lieu of fences. Nurse used blackwood acacia, Modesto ash, Canary Island pine, and Lombardy popular for barrier plantings. An occasional plant of Oriental arborvitae and Italian cypress was also used, but these are not ideally suited for this purpose and occur sporadically.

Foundation plantings were originally designed to hide foundations and tend to soften the transition between the ground and the buildings. These are fundamental design plants and a wide variety were used for this purpose, including Japanese boxwoods, California privet, myrtle, little-leafed myrtle, mock orange, laurel cherry, red

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clusterberry, and shiny-leaf privet. During the primary occupation at Hamilton these shrubs were kept pruned and boxed-shaped, reflecting the preferred look of the day. Most of these plantings in the NCO area have become quite large and overgrown and now appear as accent plants.

Accent plants serve to set off entranceways, driveway corners, highlight a building front, or provide individuality. Nurse planned these plants as upright accents to contrast with the foundation plantings. In the NCO area a limited number of species were used for this purpose, primarily New Zealand dracaena, Italian cypress, and Oriental arborvitae. Some streets in the NCO areas were also planted with trees, primarily sycamore or London planetree and Modesto ash. Very few trees are present along Crescent Drive, but San Jose Drive is heavily planted with London planetrees.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

B. Historic Maps and Views:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398)

C. Interviews:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398)

D. Bibliography:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398)

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington

1972 Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S. U.S. Army and World War II, Office of Military History.

Hamilton Facility Cards

1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

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Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa

1993 National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

Thomason and Associates

1993 Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398)

F. Supplemental Material:

Copies of representative floor plans of Facility Nos. 553, 561, 573, 574, 587, 589, 591, 593, 595, 597, dated in the 1930s and prepared by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

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The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

